

First conviction for illegal transshipment of goods containing asbestos materials by shipping company

TNT Express Worldwide (HK) Limited was intercepted illegally transshipping goods containing asbestos through Hong Kong to Sierra Leone from Malaysia. The company was convicted and fined a total of \$4,000 at Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (April 1) for contravening the Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO). This is the first conviction since the amendment to the relevant ordinance came into effect.

A spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) said that a notification was received from the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department in September last year of an interception of goods suspected of containing asbestos materials at the Asia Airfreight Terminal at Hong Kong International Airport. After investigation, EPD staff confirmed that the goods, with nine rolls of rope lagging containing asbestos weighing about 45 kilograms, were being transhipped by an international shipping company, TNT Express Worldwide (HK) Limited, through Hong Kong to Sierra Leone from Malaysia. The EPD prosecuted the company, which was responsible for transshipping the goods, under the APCO after gathering evidence.

The EPD spokesman reminded international shipping companies that the government has completely banned the import, transshipment, supply and use of all forms of asbestos so as to protect public health since the implementation of the Air Pollution Control (Amendment) Ordinance 2014 in April 2014. Anyone that imports or tranships asbestos or asbestos-containing materials without an exemption commits an offence and will be liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment.